

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

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LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate, comprising:

~~a separator arrangement step~~ for arranging a ~~sheet-like~~ sheet-shaped separator so as to cover both surfaces of an electrode plate;

~~a separator bonding step~~ for thermally welding the separator by applying a first heating plate along a to-be-bonded edge of the separator adjacent to the electrode plate, the first heating plate having a width which is so set as to correspond to a width of a bonded portion of the separator; and

~~a separator cutting step~~ for cutting off the separator by pressing a second heating plate against substantially a central part of the bonded portion,

wherein the separator is made of an ordinary fiber cloth comprising a resin component which is sublimed by heating.

2. (Currently Amended) The method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 1,

wherein the ~~separator bonding step and the separator~~ thermally welding and the cutting step are performed in combination in one process by use of a single-unit heating plate having a protrusion ~~for cutting that cuts~~ the separator, and the single-unit heating plate ~~serving serves~~ as the first and second heating plates in common.

3. (Currently Amended) The method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 1,

wherein, at least in the thermally welding ~~the separator bonding step~~, the separator is supported, via a cushioning member, at one surface opposite to its first heating plate side surface.

4. (Currently Amended) The method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 1,

wherein, in the thermally welding ~~separator bonding step~~, a protective sheet is interposed between the first heating plate and the separator.

5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate, comprising:

a bonding and cutting member ~~composed of~~ comprising a heating plate having a width which is so set as to correspond to a bonded portion of a separator, the separator being so arranged as to cover both surfaces of an electrode plate, the bonding and cutting member

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having a cutting protrusion formed in substantially a central part thereof ~~for cutting to cut~~ the bonded portion,

wherein the separator is made of an ordinary fiber cloth comprising a resin component which is sublimed by heating.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 5,

wherein the bonding and cutting member is constructed by combining a first heating plate ~~for cutting~~ having a the cutting protrusion to cut the separator with a plurality of second heating plates ~~for bonding~~ arranged on both sides of the first heating plate ~~for cutting~~ with an interposed insulating material therebetween to bond the separator, and a separate heater is provided ~~with heaters~~ for heating the first heating plate ~~for cutting~~ and the second heating plate ~~for bonding separately~~ to heat the first and second heating plates individually.

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate, comprising:

a second heating plate ~~for bonding~~ having a width which is so set as to correspond to a bonded portion of a separator arranged ~~so as~~ to cover both surfaces of an electrode plate; and

a first heating plate ~~for cutting~~ that cuts substantially a central part of the bonded portion,

wherein the separator is made of an ordinary fiber cloth comprising a resin component which is sublimed by heating.

8. (Currently Amended) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 5,

wherein a cushioning member is arranged on a ~~back-face~~ back side of the bonded portion of the separator.

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 7,

wherein a protective sheet is interposed between the second heating plate ~~for bonding~~ and the separator,

and a device ~~for supplying and taking~~ that supplies and takes up the protective sheet is provided.

10. (Currently Amended) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 7,

wherein a cushioning member is arranged on a ~~back-face~~ back side of the bonded portion of the separator.

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